



Empowering Youth Through Apprenticeships: Insights from the National Youth Apprenticeship Summit

November 2023

In a transformative gathering of minds, over 250 educators, employers, and nonprofit organizational leaders from 48 states congregated for the 2023 National Youth Apprenticeship Summit in October. The two-and-a-half-day conference, hosted by CareerWise, a YARG grantee, and Partnerships to Advance Youth Apprenticeships (PAYA), delved into the intricacies of developing effective youth apprenticeship programs. Participants explored what motivates young people to engage in such initiatives and how to establish meaningful connections with employers to shape the future of workforce development.

A prevailing theme throughout the summit underscored how student success hinges on the support of internal staff, external partners, human resources professionals, and program managers. The consensus was clear: apprenticeship initiatives must respond to the needs of the employers and then construct scalable pathways. It was emphasized repeatedly: Registered Apprenticeship (RA) initiatives must be student-centered and business led.

The Education System as a Catalyst for Workforce Development

The summit highlighted the indispensable role of the education system in workforce development. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) emphasized the necessity of aligning Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) with the broader education and workforce systems. Industry-driven youth apprenticeships, aligned seamlessly with the education system, bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Navigating Challenges and Building Trust

Several challenges were addressed during the summit. The outdated National Apprenticeship Act of 1937 requires urgent reauthorization to establish federal standards. Liability insurance emerged as a significant barrier preventing youth participation in many apprenticeship programs. Discrepancies between state apprenticeship agencies and the DOL Office of Apprenticeship (OA) posed additional hurdles. To overcome these obstacles, it was recommended to engage intermediaries and leverage resources from state and federal agencies.

Building trust emerged as a cornerstone for effective engagement with employers. Trust, transparency, and open communication were identified as catalysts for productive collaborations. Progress, attendees agreed, moves at the speed of trust.

Successful Models and Inspirational Initiatives

[Accenture](#), a trailblazer in this realm, has seamlessly integrated apprenticeships into its talent and business strategy. Apprentices split their time between school and work, with older apprentices mentoring the youth. Comprehensive training for supervisors and apprenticeship-related projects have been pivotal in ensuring a holistic learning experience.

[Trident Community College](#) illustrates the power of collaborative efforts. One employer's challenge has mobilized others, emphasizing the domino effect of positive change. The journey, though sometimes arduous, has been likened to a "speedboat amongst battleships," symbolizing the agility and impact of apprenticeship programs in the grand scheme of workforce development.

Global Lessons and Local Solutions

JP Morgan Chase CEO Jaime Dimon's perspective echoed a universal truth: Success stems from skills learned, not just degrees earned. The Swiss model, in which every industry collaborates with schools, stands as a testament to the enduring value of investing in youth early on. While initial costs were incurred, the long-term payoffs have been undeniable, making the endeavor not just profitable but also sustainable.

In essence, the summit served as a forum for ideas, sparking conversations that are reshaping the landscape of youth apprenticeships nationwide. The collective wisdom of educators, employers, and leaders underscored the potential of these programs to bridge educational gaps, empower young individuals, and build a workforce that is not just skilled but also resilient, adaptable, and inclusive. As the insights from the summit permeate communities, it is the hope that these initiatives will continue to flourish, driving positive change from local communities to the national stage.

A few YARG grantees shared their takeaways:

"[On] the trifecta of stakeholders in New York City: Education System (chancellor); local government (mayor); business (a group of NYC based CEOs). All three working together have committed to meeting a pretty audacious goal. Each group has a clearly defined champion for youth apprenticeship.

[On] the policy session: the session outlined some great ideas for reflection related to important pieces of policy that need to be solidly in place, including pieces on portability, equity, and career readiness."

– Dr. Paula Kellerer, Vice President, Youth Apprenticeship
Idaho Workforce Development Council

"My biggest take away was the enthusiasm for developing strong [Youth Registered Apprenticeship] YRA pipelines for underrepresented populations. I could feel the sense of urgency from other states as we head towards 2030. Our young people are in need due to the damaging economic effects of COVID-19 and inflation."

– Kartav Patel, Apprenticeship Analyst,
Workforce Development – State Apprenticeship Expansion Employment & Training
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity